Wilson's Failure at Paris Limned in Bold Pen Picture

Others of Big Four Easily Outgeneralled President, British Writer Shows, Because of His Peculiar Temperament, Inexperience in World Affairs and Obstinate Nature

John Maynard Keynes, author of "The Economic Consequences of Peace," a book to be published next week, was the representative of the British Treasury at the Paris Peace Conference, until June 7, 1919. His estimate of President Wilson, which follows, is the major part of one chapter entitled "When the Big Four Met."

WHAT a place the President held in the hearts and hopes of the world when he sailed to us in the George Washington! What a great man came to Europe in those early days of our victory!

In November, 1918, the armies of Foch and the words of Wilson had brought us sudden escape from what was swallowing up all we cared for. The conditions seemed favorable beyond any expectation The victory was so complete that fear need play no part in the settlement.

When President Wilson left Washington he enjoyed a prestige and a moral influence throughout the world unequalled in history. His bold and measured words carried to the peoples of Europe above and beyond the voices of their own politicians. The enemy peoples trusted him to carry out the compact he had made with them; and the allied peoples acknowledged him not as a victor only but almost as a prophet. In addition to this moral influence, the realities of power were in his hands. The American armies were at the height of their numbers, discipline and equipment. Europe was in complete dependence on the food supplies of the United States; and financially she was even more absolutely at their mercy. Europe not only already owed the United States more than she could pay; but only a large measure of further assistance could save her from starvation and bankruptcy. Never had a philosopher held such weapons wherewith to bind the princes of this world. How the crowds of the European capitals pressed about the carriage of the President! With what curiosity, anxiety and hope we sought a glimpse of the features and bearing of the man of destiny who, coming from the West, was to bring healing to the wounds of the ancient parent of his civilization and lay for us the foundations of the future!

Disillusion Complete.

The disillusion was so complete that some of those who had trusted most hardly dared speak of it. Could it be true? they asked of those who returned from Paris. Was the treaty really as bad as it seemed? What had happened to the President? What weakness or what misfortune had led to so extraordinary, so unlooked for a betrayal?

Yet the causes were very ordinary and human. The President was not a hero or a prophet; he was not even a philosopher; but a generously intentioned man with many of the weaknesses of other human beings and lacking that dominating intellectual equipment which would have been necessary to cope with the subtle and dangerous spellbinders whom a tremendous clash of forces and personalities had brought to the top as triumphant masters in the swift game of give and take, face to face in council—a game of which he had no experience at all.

We had indeed quite a wrong idea of the President. We knew him to be solitary and aloof and believed him very strong willed and obstinate. We did not figure him as a man of detail, but the clearness with which he had taken hold of certain main ideas would, we thought, in combination with his tenacity, enable him to sweep through cobwebs. Besides these qualities he would have the objectivity, the cultivation and the wide knowledge of the student. The great distinction of language which had marked his famous notes seemed to indicate a man of lofty and powerful imagination. His portraits indicated a fine presence and a commanding delivery. With all this he had attained and held with increasing authority the first position in a country where the arts of the politician are not neglected. All of which, without expecting the impossible, seemed a fine combination of qualities for the matter in hand.

Not Sensitive to Environment.

The first impression of Mr. Wilson at close quarters was to impair some but not all of these illusions. His head and features were finely cut and exactly like his photographs, and the muscles of his neck and the carriage of his head were distinguished. The first glance at the President disclosed in fact that, whatever else he might be, his temperament was not primarily that of the student or the scholar; that he had not much even of that culture of the world which marks M. Clemenceau and Mr. Balfour as exquisitely cultivated gentlemen of their class and generation. But more serious than this, he was not only insensitive to his surroundings in the external sense—he was not sensitive to his environment at all.

What chance could such a man have against Mr. Lloyd George's unerring, almost mediumlike sensibility to every one immediately round him? To see the British Prime Minister watching the company, with six or seven senses not available to ordinary men, judging character, motive and subconscious impulse, perceiving what each was thinking and even what each was going to say next, and compounding with telepathic instinct the argument or appeal best suited to the vanity, weakness or self-interest of his immediate auditor, was to realize that the poor President would be playing blind man's buff in that party. Never could a man have stepped into the parlor of a more perfect and predestined victim to the finished accomplishment of the Prime Minister. The Old World was tough in wickedness anyhow: the Old World's heart of stone might blunt the sharpest blade of the bravest knight errant. But this blind and deaf Don Quixote was entering a cavern where the swift and glittering blade was in the hands of the adversary.

But if the President was not the philosopher king, what was he? After all he was a man who had spent much of his life at a university. He was by no means a business man or an ordinary party politician, but a man of force, personality and importance. What then was his temperament?

The clue once found was illuminating The President was a nonconformist minister, perhaps a Presbyterian. His thought and his temperament were essentially theological, not intellectual, with all the strength and the weakness of that manner of thought, feeling and expression.

With this picture of him in mind, we can return to the actual course of events. The President's programme for the world, as set forth in his speeches and his notes, had displayed a spirit and a purpose so admirable that the last desire of his sympathizers was to criticise details—the details, they felt, were quite rightly not filled in at present, but would be in due course. It was commonly believed at the commencement of the Paris conference that the President had thought out, with the aid of a large body of advisers, a comprehensive scheme not only for the League of Nations, but for the embodiment of the Fourteen Points in an actual treaty of peace.

But in fact the President had thought out nothing; when it came to practice, his ideas were nebulous and incomplete. He had no plan, no scheme, no constructive ideas whatever for clothing with the flesh of life the commandments which he had thundered from the White House. He could have preached a sermon on any of them or have addressed a stately prayer to the Almighty for their fulfilment; but he could not frame their concrete application to the actual state of Europe.

Often Ill Informed.

He not only had no proposals in detail, but he was in many respects, perhaps inevitably, ill informed as to European conditions. And not only was he ill informed—that was true of Mr. Lloyd George also—but his mind was slow and inadaptable. The President's slowness among the Europeans was noteworthy. He could not, all in a minute, take in what the rest were saying, size up the situation with a glance, frame a reply and meet the case by a slight change of ground; and he was liable, therefore, to defeat by the mere swiftness, apprehension and agility of a Lloyd George. There can seldom have been a statesman of the first rank more incompetent than the President in the agilities of the council chamber. A moment often arrives when substantial victory is yours if by some slight appearance of a concession you can save the face of the opposition or conciliate them by a restatement of your proposal helpful to them and not injurious to anything essential to yourself.

The President was not equipped with this simple and usual artfulness. His mind was too slow and unresourceful to be ready with any alternatives. The President was capable of digging his toes in and refusing to budge, as he did over Fiume. But he had no other mode of defence, and it needed as a rule but little manœuvring by his opponents to prevent matters coming to such a head until it was too late. By pleasantness and an appearance of conciliation, the President would be manœuvred off his ground, would miss the moment for digging his toes in, and before he knew where he had been got to, it was too late. Besides it is impossible month after month in intimate and ostensibly friendly converse between close associates to be digging the toes in all the time. Victory would only have been possible to one who had always a sufficiently lively apprehension of the position as a whole to reserve his fire and know for certain the rare exact moments for decisive action. And for that the President was far too slow-minded and bewildered.

He did not remedy these defects by seeking aid from the collective wisdom of his lieutenants. He had gathered round him for the economic chapters of the treaty a very able group of business men—but they were inexperienced in public affairs and knew (with one or two exceptions) as little of Europe as he did and they were only called in regularly as he might need them for a particular purpose. Thus the aloofness which had been found effective in Washington was maintained and the abnormal reserve of his nature did not allow near him any one who aspired to moral equality or the continuous exercise of influence. His fellow plenipotentiaries were dummies; and even the trusted Col. House, with vastly more knowledge of men and of Europe than the President, from whose sensitiveness the President's dulness had gained so much, fell into the background as time went on.

All this was encouraged by his colleagues on the Council of Four, who, by the break up of the Council of Ten, completed the isolation which the President's own temperament had initiated. Thus day after day and week after week, he allowed himself to be closeted, unsupported, unadvised and alone, with men much sharper than himself, in situations of supreme difficulty, where he needed for success every description of resource, fertility and knowledge. He allowed himself to be drugged by their atmosphere, to discuss on the basis of their plans and of their data, and to be led along their paths.

These and other various causes combined to produce the following situation. The reader must remember that the processes which are here compressed into a few pages took place slowly, gradually, insidiously, over a period of about five months.

After a display of much principle and dignity in the early days of the Council of Ten, he discovered that there were certain very important points in the programme of his French, British or Italian colleagues, as the case might be, of which he was incapable of securing the surrender by the methods of secret diplomacy. What then was he to do in the last resort? He could let the conference drag on an endless length by the exercise of sheer obstinacy. He could break it up and return to America in a rage with nothing settled. Or he could attempt an appeal to the world over the heads of the conference. These were wretched alternatives, against each of which a great deal could be said. They are also very risky—especially for a politician.

What He Faced.

The President's mistaken policy over the Congressional election had weakened his personal position in his own country and it was by no means certain that the American public would support him in a position of intransigeancy. It would mean a campaign in which the issues would be clouded by every sort of personal and party consideration, and who could say if right would triumph in a struggle which would certainly not be decided on its merits? Besides, any open rupture with his colleagues would certainly bring upon his head the blind passions of "anti-German" resentment with which the public of all allied countries were still inspired. They would not be cool enough to treat the issue as one of international morality or of the right governance of Europe. The cry would simply be that for various sinister and selfish reasons the President wished "to let the Hun off." The almost unanimous voice of the French and British press could be anticipated.

Thus if he threw down the gage publicly he might be defeated. And if he were defeated, would not the final peace be far worse than if he were to retain his prestige and endeavor to make it as good as the limiting conditions of European politics would allow him? But above all, if he were defeated, would he not lose the League of Nations? And was not this, after all, by far the most important issue for the future happiness of the world?

At the crisis of his fortunes the President was a lonely man. Caught up in the toils of the Old World, he stood in great need of sympathy, of moral support, of the enthusiasm of masses. But buried in the conference, stifled in the hot and poisoned atmosphere of Paris, no echo reached him from the outer world and no throb of passion, sympathy or encouragement from his silent constituents in all countries. He felt that the blaze of popularity which had greeted his arrival in Europe was already dimmed; the Paris press jeered at him openly; his political opponents at home were taking advantage of his absence to create an atmosphere against him; England was cold, critical and unresponsive. He had so formed his entourage that he did not receive through private channels the current of faith and enthusiasm of which the public sources seemed dammed up. He needed but lacked the added strength of collective faith. The German terror still overhung us, and even the sympathetic public was very cautious; the enemy must not be encouraged, our friends must be supported, this was not the time for discord or agitations, the President must be trusted to do his best. And in this drought the flower of the President's faith withered and dried up.

But as soon as he had taken the road of compromise, the defects, already indicated, of his temperament and of his equipment were fatally apparent. He could take the high line; he could practise obstinacy; he could write notes from Sinai or Olympus; he could remain unapproachable in the White House or even in the Council of Ten and be safe. But if he once stepped down to the intimate equality of the Four, the game was evidently up.

The Danger of Temperament.

Now it was that what I have called his theological or Presbyterian temperament became dangerous. Having decided that some concessions were unavoidable, he might have sought by firmness and address and the use of the financial power of the United States to secure as much as he could of the substance, even at some sacrifice of the letter. But the President was not capable of so clear an understanding with himself as this implied. He was too conscientious. Although compromises were now necessary, he remained a man of principle and the Fourteen Points a contract absolutely binding upon him. He would do nothing that was not honorable; he would do nothing that was contrary to his great profession of faith. Thus without any abatement of the verbal inspiration of the Fourteen Points, they became a document for gloss and interpretation and for all the intellectual apparatus of self-deception, by which, I dare say, the President's forefathers had persuaded themselves that the course they thought it necessary to take was consistent with every syllable of the Pentateuch.

The President's attitude to his colleagues had now become: I want to meet you as far as I can; I see your difficulties and I should like to be able to agree to what you propose; but I can do nothing that is not just and right, and you must first of all show me that what you want does really fall within the words of the pronouncements which are binding on me. Then began the weaving of sophistry and Jesuitical exegesis that was finally to clothe with insincerity the language and substance of the whole treaty. The word was issued to the witches of all Paris:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

The subtlest sophisters and most hypocritical draftsmen were set to work and produced many ingenious exercises which might have deceived for more than an hour a cleverer man than the President.

Thus instead of saying that German-Austria is prohibited from uniting with Germany except by leave of France (which would be inconsistent with the principle of self-determination) the treaty, with delicate draftsmanship, states that "Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of Austria within the frontiers which may be fixed in a treaty between that State and the principal Allied and Associated Powers; she agrees that this independence shall be inalienable, except with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations," which sounds, but is not, quite different. And who knows but that the President forgot that another part of the treaty provides that for this purpose the Council of the League must be unanimous.

Instead of giving Danzig to Poland, the treaty establishes Danzig as a "free" city, but includes this "free" city within the Polish customs frontier, entrusts to Poland the control of the river and railway system and provides that "the Polish Government shall undertake the conduct of the foreign relations of the free city of Danzig as well as the diplomatic protection of citizens of that city when abroad."

In placing the river system of Germany under foreign control the treaty speaks of declaring international those "river systems which naturally provide more than one State with access to the sea, with or without transshipment from one vessel to another."

Such instances could be multiplied. The honest and intelligent purpose of French policy to limit the population of Germany and weaken her economical system is clothed, for the President's sake, in the august language of freedom and international equality.

But perhaps the most decisive moment in the disintegration of the President's moral position and the clouding of his mind was when at last, to the dismay of his advisers, he allowed himself to be persuaded that the expenditure of the Allied Governments on pensions and separation allowances could be fairly regarded as "damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers by German aggression by land, by sea and from the air," in a sense in which the other expenses of the war could not be so regarded. It was a long theological struggle in which, after the rejection of many different arguments the President finally capitulated before a masterpiece of the sophist's art.

At last the work was finished; and the President's conscience was still intact. In spite of everything, I believe that his temperament allowed him to leave Paris a really sincere man; and it is probable that to this day he is genuinely convinced that the treaty contains practically nothing inconsistent with his former professions.

The Work Too Complete.

But the work was too complete, and to this was due the last tragic episode of the drama. The reply of Brockdorff-Rantzau inevitably took the line that Germany had laid down her arms on the basis of certain assurances and that the treaty in many particulars was not consistent with these assurances. But this was exactly what the President could not admit; in the sweat of solitary contemplation and with prayers to God he had done nothing that was not just and right; for the President to admit that the German reply had force in it was to destroy his self-respect and to disrupt the inner equipoise of his soul; and every instinct in his stubborn nature rose in self-protection. In the language of medical psychology, to suggest to the President that the treaty was an abandonment of his professions was to touch on the raw a Freudian complex. It was a subject intolerable to discuss and every subconscious instinct plotted to defeat its further exploration.

Thus it was that Clemenceau brought to success what had seemed to be a few months before the extraordinary and impossible proposal that the Germans should not be heard. If only the President had not been too conscientious, if only he had not concealed from himself what he had been doing, even at the last moment he was in a position to have recovered lost ground and to have achieved some very considerable success. But the President was set. His arms and legs had been spliced by the surgeons to a certain posture, and they must be broken again before they could be altered. To his horror Mr. Lloyd George, desiring at the last moment all the moderation he dared, discovered that he could not in five days persuade the President of error in what it had taken five months to prove to him to be just and right. After all it was harder to de-bamboozle this old Presbyterian than it had been to bamboozle him, for the former involved his belief in and respect for himself.

Thus in the last act the President stood for stubbornness and a refusal of conciliations.

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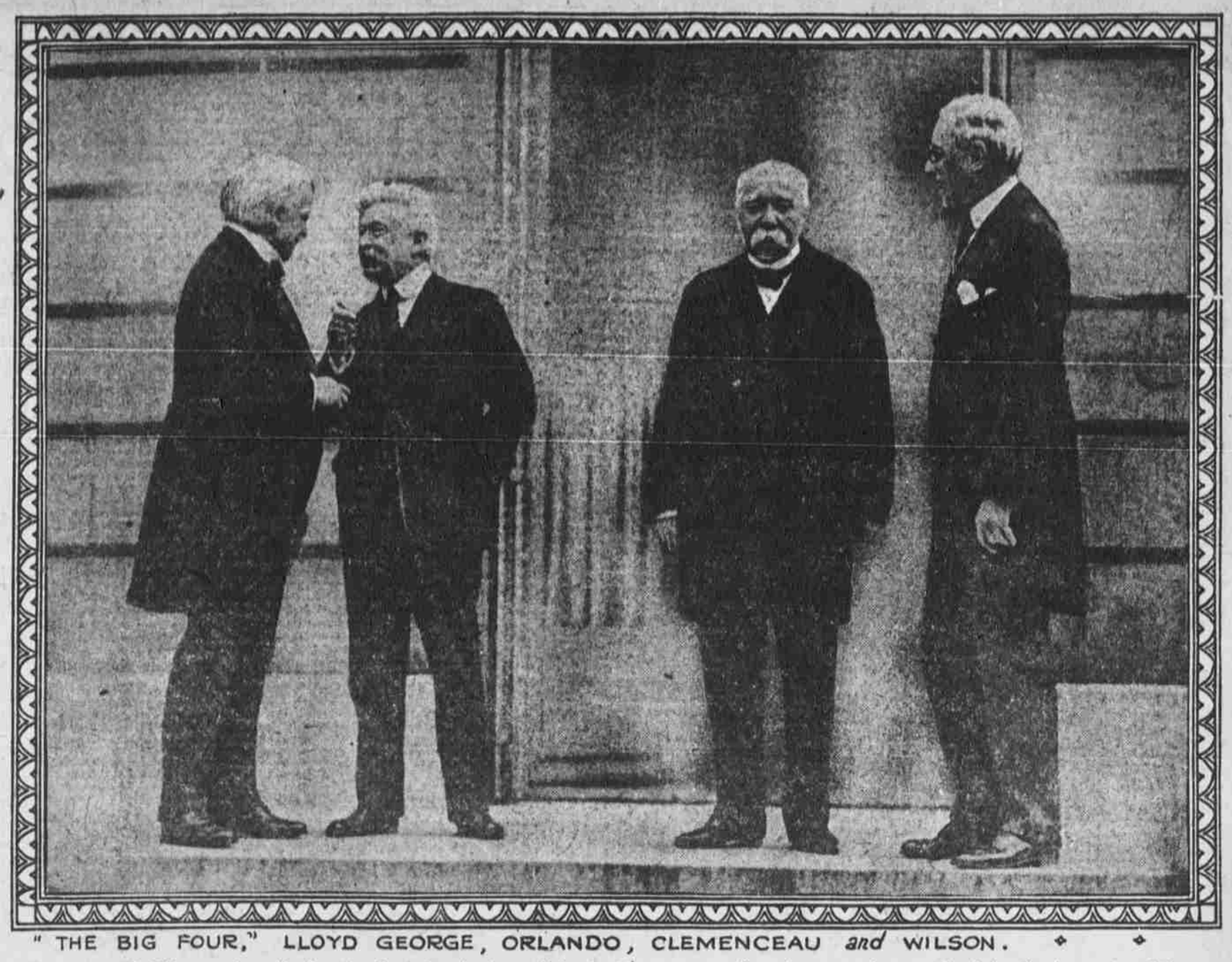

"THE BIG FOUR," LLOYD GEORGE, ORLANDO, CLEMENCEAU *and* WILSON.

United States Fur Experts Find Romance in the Wilds

By JAMES B. MORROW.

A BIOGRAPHY of the wild and handsome Mr. S. G. Fox—S. for Silver and G. for Gray—would show that his parents were red and that his brothers and sisters were of the same color.

The aristocrat of the family, but unacknowledged, so far as any one has information on the subject, it would be seen that he grew up and that early one spring he chose a wife—singular number and not plural, it will be noted, because he was a monongamist and not a polygamist.

And the biographer would say that Mr. Fox was loyal to the love of his choice, that he brought her food, immediately after they had children of their own, and that he watched outside their den, ready instantly to bark an alarm, until she was strong enough to come forth herself into the air and sunlight.

Toward his infant sons and daughters, it would be stated, he was dignifiedly paternal until they were four weeks old, after which period he occasionally bit them at meal time, if, in the eagerness of their hunger, they were unmannerly enough to eat the thing he was trying to eat himself.

So he lived—an animal of good parts, on the whole, except for his propensity to attack other foxes when they were not looking in his direction—until the tragic evening that he gingerly stepped into a trap.

Whereupon he was skinned and his pelt was sold for, say, $1,500. If, however, in the stocks of the traders or manufacturers another pelt had matched his in quality and coloring his own might have brought as much as $2,000.

Dead and alive, then, the wild and handsome Mr. S. G. Fox was both a sober and a romantic individual. Had he been born in captivity, however, his biography, of course, would have to be grounded on another series of facts. In that event, he and Mrs. Fox, both being silver gray, as prospective parents, might have been salable once at a figure as high as $15,000.

Sales, indeed, at that price actually have been negotiated and in one instance the pair were only six months old. But such transactions occurred in the maddest part of what properly can be called the gray fox frenzy, which started in Canada a quarter of a century ago.

DR ALBERT K FISHER
HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT COSTLY FURS and FUR ANIMALS
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Fox breeders, monopolists at first, keeping their methods secret, even from the knowledge of their own families, sent twenty-five silver gray pelts to London in the year 1910. It was the finest collection of skins ever seen in the British market. One pelt was sold for $2,624. The average price was $1,386.

The news got out and an era of fierce speculation ensued. Companies were organized, shares were sold, and pairs of foxes were capitalized as highly as $30,000. At present there are fox ranches in Canada and Alaska and in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon and Washington. Silver gray foxes, after the boom collapsed, dropped in price to $1,000 a pair and less.

The world war sent fox furs and other kinds of furs kiting once more, and at this moment they are dearer than ever before in all the history of luxury and fashion. If the ancient and barefooted man who wore a skin belted around his middle and a club on his shoulder were to return to earth this winter and learn the quotations for furs that in his day were beneath his notice he would claw at his beard in astonishment. "And this," he would exclaim in his own language, which no one could understand, "is civilization."

The national Government—for a long time has been studying wild as well as tame animals—cows and badgers, horses and bobcats, sheep and rabbits, principally in behalf of the farmer. The skunk that eats a chicken gets himself by that nefarious act into the sacred domain of agriculture. And so on.

There are, as is known, Government experts in the line of all domestic animals. Even turkeys have their own specialists. The fact may not be known, however, that regular biologists, men of learning and science, are employed by the Government to look into the habits of the owls who eat

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